

UPF Melbourne, Australia Launches Peacebuilding Seminar Series

Greg Stone
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Melbourne, Australia - The first seminar of UPF-Australia's Way2Happiness and Peacebuilding Seminar Series was held in-person in Melbourne and online on April 15, 2023, on the theme, "Finding Meaning and Purpose - An Interfaith Perspective," which is vital to live a happy life.

The interactive series focuses on three pillars of finding meaning and connection by managing oneself, and mind and body unity; managing our relationships; and managing our relationship with our natural environment well. In essence, it provides a holistic life education approach to foster good people, good education and good global citizens, promoting common benefit and sustainable development.



Twenty-six participants attended the event in-person, while four joined online from Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. Five interfaith groups were represented.

Each 15 minute presentation was followed by 20 minutes of group discussion and Q and A with the speaker. The interactive program enabled participants to share their insights on each topic. Rev. Daniel Meadows, chair of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) Victoria, was the emcee.

Ambassador for Peace Mr. Ahmed Tohow, deputy chair of the board of directors of the Global Somali Diaspora and director of the East Africa Security and Policy Forum, gave a presentation, titled, "Purpose Gives Us a Clear System of Values for Measuring and Defining Our Values and Our Lives - A Muslim Perspective."

Mr. Tohow spoke about the core practices of Islam and how they sustain his life and relationships with others. He expressed that he is grateful for the blessings God has bestowed on us and that they remind us

of our duties to society. Therefore, happiness is attained by living the life of a Muslim. Participants said they learned much more about the Muslim way of life through the presentation.

Dr. John Bellavance, global vice president of Sun Moon University (SMU), vice president of UPF-Australia, and coordinator of the International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP)-Oceania, presented in the morning and afternoon sessions.



During the morning session, Dr. Bellavance spoke on the topic, "Living Consciously - Know Thyself." He explained that living consciously is a means to rid ourselves of hang-ups and fulfill our potential. He used the analogy of Plato's Cave to explain that humans live in a state of denial of their true human condition. Those who leave the cave into the light of day see the world as it really is and see themselves as they truly are.



During the afternoon session, Dr. Bellavance's presentation focused on "Mental Prisons - Free Your Mind." To discover our strengths and weaknesses, we must become aware of the mental prison we have created for ourselves, he said. For example, becoming aware of our need for approval from others and letting it go is a realization that allows us to be free, comfortable and happy with ourselves and others.

Mrs. Anne Bellavance, president of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Australia and vice president of WFWP International, Asia Pacific 2 (Oceania and Southeast Asia), talked about "How Do We Become Self-Aware?."

Mrs. Bellavance explained that rigid beliefs we have about life stem from persistent, irrational demands we place on ourselves, others and the world due to stories we create in our mind about past events. We observe our mind racing with dysfunctional thoughts about the past and project them into the future. The secret is that we can change these thoughts into positive, loving ones by removing the past from the reality of our present and future.



Ven. Bhikkhuni Bodhicitta, a Theravada Buddhist nun practicing in Melbourne and Sri Lanka and spiritual director of the International Centre for Inner Peace and Happiness, guided the participants in a mindful meditation.

Two new Ambassadors for Peace were appointed: Mr. Shashi Kochhar, recipient of the Order of Australia Medal (OAM), and Mrs. Shakilah Wesonga, who was recognized for her work with Rotary SAFE Families and its Inclusive Communities Initiative, which provides printed translated guides and films to African-Australian communities. Additionally, Mrs. Wesonga has worked with the KenAus (Kenya/Australia) Fellowship to bring unity between Kenyan tribes and help others in their Christian faith and wellbeing.

Reflecting on the event, one participant said: "Very well done. The seminar gave food for the soul and was a profound experience."

Partners of the seminar were WFWP and FFWPU.

To view a recording of the event, [click here](#).

